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MISS SMITH: NOTES IN REPLY.

I.

IF my article has done no more than induce my friend the Rev. D. Fay to write the foregoing suggestive and powerful protest, I should be hard to please were I not content. No doubt many readers will agree with him rather than with the person whom he terms Miss Smith's advocate. But, accepting Mr. Fay's phrase for the purpose of argument, I should like to subjoin a few notes in reply.

It is clear that if Mr. Fay held the keys of the Synagogue, Miss Smith would knock at its doors in vain. But Mr. Fay's duty to his trust would surely not be quite satisfied by this display of vigilance. Not only ought Miss Smith to find the door barred, but so ought everyone else who thinks as she does about Judaism, even though their case be not complicated by the disturbing element of a contemplated marriage. It is even questionable whether those who, born Jews, hold views similar to the opinions put into the mouth of Miss Smith's lover, ought not, if Mr. Fay is logical, to be forcibly expelled from the Synagogue, into which they have no other right of entry than the accidental claim of birth. Otherwise, a harder measure is meted out to the new-comer than to those who retain a position within the walls of the Synagogue, which would have been denied to them but that their parents were Jews.

It is further obvious that though Mr. Fay writes in a tone which implies that Judaism might receive converts, still, if his view prevailed in the Synagogue, the reception of converts would be practically impossible. For it is not to be expected that new-comers will in any large number be able to accept Judaism unless Judaism is prepared to

hold out its hand, and to desist from demanding allegiance to those elements which appeal to a special race, and not to all the families of the earth.

Mr. Fay's desire, almost pathetic at this date in the world's history, to have an "unadjectived" Judaism, has invariably been echoed by the representatives of all religions who have witnessed the growth of reforms which they feared and yet appreciated. Unfortunately, you cannot nowadays have anything without its Adjective. The Nouns are born with them. And when Mr. Fay admits that, like Miss Smith's advocate, he cannot speak in the name of Judaism, one is tempted to ask, Why not, if Mr. Fay's Judaism can be so easily formulated and so clearly defined? In short, Mr. Fay's Judaism needs its adjective; the only difference is that he, unlike "Liberal" Judaism, finds it very hard to appropriate the right adjective. I cannot call the Judaism of the United Synagogue of London Orthodox, or Conservative, or Talmudic, or Shulchan Aruch Judaism. I do not know what it is. If "Liberal" Judaism is hazy, then the official Judaism of the United Synagogue is covered in cloud. I should dearly like a definition of it. At present I only know what it is not; namely, it is not "unadjectived Judaism." Surely Mr. Fay is aware that there are many Jews from abroad who absolutely decline to partake of meat food at the table of *any Jewish minister* in this country. And this is only one instance out of many. And if Mr. Fay thinks his Judaism unadjectived, do these other Jews—foreign critics, who also claim that *they* are the sole possessors of unadjectived Judaism—do *they* speak of the Synagogue in England without using adjectives? What do they think and say of the observance of ceremonies, and of the practice of Judaism, as it is found in England?

Mr. Fay rightly says that Jews, especially the children, must be taught to *practise*, besides believing. This is exactly what "Liberal" Judaism says, only it adds as a rider the converse: Jews must be taught to *believe* besides

practising. It is just the pressing need of an assimilation between belief and practice which calls for the serious consideration of modern Jews. Is it so fine a thing that our unadjectived children are to-day taught by their religious instructors to observe certain ceremonies which their own fathers ignore? Their young lives and the doctrines they are taught are in hopeless contradiction. At first, of course, the children do not know this; when they later on awake to the discovery, the result is rampant Antinomianism. It is just our appreciation of the claims of the young that gives force and vitality to the cry for a Judaism that shall not teach Jewish children what their lives will be passed in unlearning, or at least in disregarding. It is a difficult puzzle, what to teach the young. I for one have not found the solution. But no solution could be worse than the present laxity, and if Mr. Fay, or any other representative of United-Synagogue-Judaism—(the compound adjective is not intended as a sneer)—would formulate a Jewish religious education which will bring its practice into accord with its theory (if it has any), he would be doing a real service to all of us who claim to be Jews, on whatever grounds, and with whatever adjectival limitations.

I cannot take leave of this point without protesting once for all against the easy calumny that a thoughtful Judaism is necessarily based on "convenience." This statement is always being made, and Mr. Fay repeats it, scoring a very neat point against a too satirical sentence of my own. All duty is in a sense an "inconvenience," but is the test of Judaism for ever to lie only in its irksomeness and its burdens? Is the Synagogue to say to me: "How many things per week do you do that worry you and bother you?" If it does, I answer, "I do, in God's name, no such things in a week or in a year. My Judaism is to me a joy, and not a sorrow; I love God, and my service to him is a heart-service that counts no cost, but seeks to do the things that I know, from his words to his inspired messengers and from his voice within me, to be the things that my

Father loves. I, *like every other Jew*, do pick and choose among the ceremonies and the rites and the beliefs that have become associated with Judaism in the course of centuries; and as I certainly claim no merit of inconvenience for what I do, so I will submit to no suspicion of yielding to convenience for what I leave undone." Is the sentence of the Synagogue on me to be, "You are no Jew because you do not feel your Judaism a weight?" It always seems to me that the advocates of the Judaism (unadjectived if you like) which—like the German Jewish orthodoxy of to-day—lays so much argumentative stress on the irksomeness of ceremonies, on what Mr. Fay calls "the burden of every feature that differentiates Judaism from any other monotheistic belief," are letting the cat out of the bag. It is they and not we who treat Judaism as a matter of convenience. They must have little else to pride themselves on when they actually put forward their inconveniences as the differentiating signs of their Judaism, as the ornaments that beautifully mark it off from other forms of unadorned monotheism. This is, to me, and to those who think with me, if there be any such, a degradation of Judaism. Are we actually going ourselves to accept and justify and parade the old anti-Rabbinical cant about the Law being a yoke? A yoke it must be to those who justify Judaism by it. Those to whom the ceremonies of Judaism were dearest, who performed them most joyfully and most incessantly, who loved God hourly and daily, and served him with their hands and hearts, and all that they possessed of love, of longing and of leisure, just these men would have hesitated to sneer at brother Jews as seekers after convenience. They bore the yoke of the Law without feeling it a yoke, without being so proud of the yoke that they should accuse of a mean love of ease those who from spiritual conviction, or philosophical thought, or a knowledge of history, considered ceremony and religious form a necessary but changing garb of the enfolded religious truths which themselves change with the changing centuries.

When Mr. Fay pronounces my Judaism nebulous, he may be right. It is nebulous ; less so to me perhaps than to those to whom I would communicate some of my meaning. On a future occasion I may try to make my meaning clearer, and I thank Mr. Fay for pointing out so skilfully some of the weak points in my "ragged" exposition. But I cannot away with the thought that Judaism deserves to live and to conquer the world, because it is a tendency rather than a result, because there is no finality in it, because it alone contains at once the fruit and the germs of truth, because the religions that grew out of it were content to stunt their own growth while Judaism has gone on developing amid its own inner life conceptions and relations to the outer life and to the world, views relating to God and man, which other forms of monotheism have been slower to absorb. But these sister religions of ours are coming nearer and nearer to the truths specifically Jewish. And Miss Smith asks the Synagogue to realise this fact, and take account of it in time.

I. ABRAHAMS.

II.

MR. FAY's reply to Mr. Abrahams' article in the October number of this magazine is written in faultless taste. It is, I think, a valuable contribution to an exceedingly important subject. Into the details of the controversy I have no desire to enter. Mr. Abrahams' subtle and playful manner, which suggests and implies more than is actually said, and which often needs to be taken in the spirit rather than in the letter, has undoubtedly exposed him to retorts of which Mr. Fay is not slow to take advantage. How far these "hits" are more than apparent—or whether "palpable" is the adjective with which they may be qualified—let the reader, with Mr. Abrahams' help, decide. If the Argument and the Protest do not give him food for

reflection, he can be little interested in religious debate. Moreover, this debate is concerned with things as well as words. Because it moves upon this higher plane I wish to draw attention to certain more general aspects of the question which are reflected in Mr. Fay's rejoinder.

For the Protest goes far deeper than its name. It is not with Miss Smith's admission into Judaism that Mr. Fay is at bottom disposed to quarrel, but with that conception of Judaism which alone, as it seems to her and to her advocate, can justify her action. It is Liberal Judaism against which Mr. Fay has donned his armour and grasped his sword. And yet he would have us think that this Liberal Judaism is but a phantom !

It is perfectly obvious that if Liberal Judaism is objectionable (and from the point of view of Rabbinical Judaism it is certainly erroneous), any recruits to its ranks are objectionable too. And the only recruits about whom it is interesting to argue are those who are converts in opinion, men and women "holding convictions." Mr. Fay knows as well as Mr. Abrahams and myself that a convert to the *dogmas* of *Rabbinical* Judaism is in the present day an impossibility. It is, therefore, perfectly rational and proper that any adherent of *Rabbinical* Judaism should dread "converts with opinions"; he will certainly object to the admission of those "who have philosophically analysed their religious bent and thoughts, and arrived at definite conclusions," which in their opinion tally with the doctrines of Judaism. For the Judaism with which their opinions tally is certainly not the Judaism of the *Shulchan Aruch*.

Mr. Fay is, therefore, wise in his generation when he points out the danger to Rabbinical Judaism which would arise were such converts to become numerous. Where I object to his article is in its tacit assumption of equivalence between his, *i.e.*, Rabbinical Judaism and Judaism as a whole. Orthodoxy is *my* doxy. We all agree to that. How can we help thinking that what we

believe is true? If we did not think so we should not believe it. The proposition, in the language of logicians, is one of mere identity. But what Mr. Fay implies is something very different. It is this. There is no doxy but my doxy. There is no Judaism outside my Judaism; that is, there is no Judaism outside Rabbinical Judaism; that is, there is no such thing as Liberal Judaism. Mr. Fay goes so far as to deny to men who call themselves Liberal Jews, not merely the right to the name of Jew (other than as a question of parentage, with which we are not concerned), but even the possession of convictions. It is against this intolerance, for I can call it by no other name, that I desire to protest.

Mr. Fay says that in the subject at issue between Mr. Abrahams and himself he would rather that "the Jew were not adjectived at all." And why? First, because "It is Judaism—the religion of the Jew without an adjective—that will probably be affected more or less seriously." Now, who is the Jew without an adjective? or rather, what does the conception of such a being imply? It implies that there is only one kind of Jew. If there were more kinds than one it would be necessary to distinguish these kinds by suitable adjectives. Mr. Abrahams, believing in at least two large kinds, employs the adjective which in his opinion best denotes the kind with which he has to deal. For only if there be but one kind can we dispense with adjectives without confusion or partiality. Mr. Fay certainly believes that he is a Jew, and that his religion is Judaism. Therefore, if adjectives are unnecessary, he believes that his kind of Judaism is the only Judaism. Making an equivalence between Rabbinical Judaism and Judaism "without an adjective," he is quite deftly able to prove that what would be harmful for Rabbinical Judaism would be harmful for Judaism altogether. The trick is easy. But it is also easy to find out how it was done.

Why is Rabbinical Judaism the only possible form of

Judaism? Now this view, which is shared by Mr. Fay with the large majority of Christian theologians, is quite susceptible of argument. I should be quite prepared to reply to Mr. Fay when he gives us, as he undoubtedly is well qualified to give us, a full and reasoned statement for the co-equality of his, or Rabbinical, Judaism, with Judaism without an adjective. But I object to any attempt to mask the issue, or to carry it by a side wind. And, further, I object to the method of disparaging our (*i.e.*, the Liberal Jews') supposed representatives. Mr. Fay goes so far along the lines of this method as to imply that we Liberal Jews are without convictions, and therefore without religion (for religion, as he says, is "a matter of conviction"), and that "generally" our "conception of a God at all" is "altogether hazy." Let me quote his words:—

I cannot clearly define to myself such a relation between the "liberal" Jew and an unadjectived Judaism, which connects him in anything more than race with the religion into which he was born. Religion is a matter of conviction. I have rarely been able to ascertain what are the convictions of the *liberal* Jew and to fix them. Mr. Abrahams describes them variously and negatively. They can neither be enumerated nor examined. We get lists of what they exclude, but these leave the mind uncertain. As a rule the matter reduces itself to a question of Jewish parentage. The liberal Jew our writer outlines is one who has thrown off the burden of every feature that differentiates Judaism from any other monotheistic belief; at best it can be said of him (and I do not lightly esteem the description) that he believes in one God and in leading a moral life. Generally he is unwilling to commit himself fully to both these confessions, his conception of a God at all being altogether hazy. But he acquiesces cordially in the virtue of morality.

Now what is the good of assertions which every Liberal Jew would immediately deny? Who are the leaders of Liberal Judaism in this country? Are they men without convictions, with a hazy conception of God, who have cast off "the burden of every feature that differentiates Judaism from any other monotheistic belief." It would be unreasonable to say that because the exponents of Liberal

Judaism have no cut and dry creed, therefore they have no creed at all. What are the "convictions" of the Rabbinical Jew? Are they always the same? Would Mr. Fay be ready to draw up a list of *his* convictions or tell us plainly that they are fully contained in any written document or creed, that we may know them and "fix" them? Mr. Abrahams, Mr. Oswald Simon, and I, for example, are three Liberal Jews. We assert that we have convictions, that we have a conception of God which is not hazy, that we have not cast off "the burden of every feature that differentiates Judaism from any other monotheistic belief." Yet we should all differ widely from the religious opinions, so far as we can imagine and infer them, of Mr. Fay. But we do not deny him the appellation of Jew. Only since, as we believe, we are Jews as well as he, his Judaism must be "adjectived" as well as ours. For the sake of convenience I propose to call his Judaism, Rabbinical Judaism, and ours Liberal Judaism. I will substitute the words Traditional and Reformed Judaism, if he prefers them. But if, on grounds of argument and reason, our religion, in his opinion, whatever its qualifying adjective, can not properly be given the substantive "Judaism," let him prove his case by reason and argument, and not by assertion. For bare assertion on the one side is met by bare assertion (that is, bare denial) on the other. Neither side gets any further. Your Judaism you say is "an active agent," ours is "a philosophy to be dreamed about." We are more tolerant than you, because we do not reverse the propositions. For of all the aberrations of intolerance with which history has made us familiar, none has been more seductive or more dangerous than the assumption that only one religion, and only one form of that religion (*i.e.*, your own), can prove the "active agent" for the spiritual life of man. God be thanked, the transforming and vital power of religion is not limited to only one of its forms. By many roads we travel Godwards, and in forms innumerable does religion shape itself not "as a philosophy to be dreamed about," but as

“an active agent” helping us, consoling us, and urging us forward in the way of righteousness and of love.

One more point, and for this occasion I have done. Mr. Fay makes the following highly interesting statement :—

We have all known converts who have entered the pale of our faith for just such reason as actuates Miss Smith, and who have, as time went on, honestly accepted the distinctive doctrines of Judaism, and whose household and home-teachings could scarcely be distinguished from the Jewish-born matrons's.

This fact, of which I was wholly unaware, is very curious, and suggests some strange questions in the spiritual anatomy of the human mind. But I cannot help noticing one clause in the sentence: “Who have, *as time went on*, honestly accepted the distinctive doctrines of Judaism.” It follows that at the time of their conversion they did *not* “honestly accept the distinctive doctrines of Judaism.” Nevertheless Mr. Fay prefers them to the class about whom I and Mr. Abrahams have spoken. These he describes as persons who “have philosophically analysed their religious bent and thoughts, and arrived at definite conclusions made to square with Judaism. It is the convert *holding convictions* such as have been described in the confessions before us who is dangerous.” And yet Mr. Fay ventures, three lines lower down, to call these persons “lip-converts”! In that case, how strange that they can be said to “hold convictions” at all. Moreover the condition of their minds, and the “conclusions” at which they have arrived, as Mr. Fay, from his point of view, is perfectly willing to admit, are largely similar to the condition of mind and to the conclusions of a “Liberal Jew.” But who can “ascertain and fix” the convictions of a Liberal Jew? And religion is a matter of conviction. Has, then, the hypothetical Miss Smith convictions and religion, while the Liberal Jew is without them? And does Rabbinical Judaism prefer converts who have *not* “philosophically analysed their religious bent and thoughts,” and who

have *not yet* accepted the distinctive doctrines of Judaism, to those who have used their reason and are prepared to act upon its voice? May we trace in these curious opinions some of the old fear that to think about religion and philosophically to analyse it, means, in the long run, to destroy it? Otherwise, the epithet, lip-convert, might be more accurately applied. For even Liberal Judaism may be sincerely accepted, as it also may be sincerely held.

C. G. MONTEFIORE.
